

*National Black
Nazarene Conference*

Orlando

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Communicating Well in the Multicultural Congregation

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Multicultural Congregations bring together groups of people with very different backgrounds

- Language
 - Foods
 - Customs
 - “the ways we do things”

Language differences are some of the most evident, and most frustrating

- Within our own language group we just say what we want
- With different groups we have to stop and think about language
- We are not used to giving attention to what we say and how we say it

So what should we do?

We could use a common language?

- Which one?
- Those who speak it have advantages
- Those who don't speak it are disadvantaged
- Who will teach it to those who haven't mastered it?

So what can we do?

Commit ourselves
to
good communication
in the
multicultural congregation

Focus on the content?

- In most of our communicating we tend to be more concerned with “saying it right” – forming the message perfectly
- “If I can just say it well then the other person will hear what I’m saying and *understand*.”
- *Speaker-oriented* communication

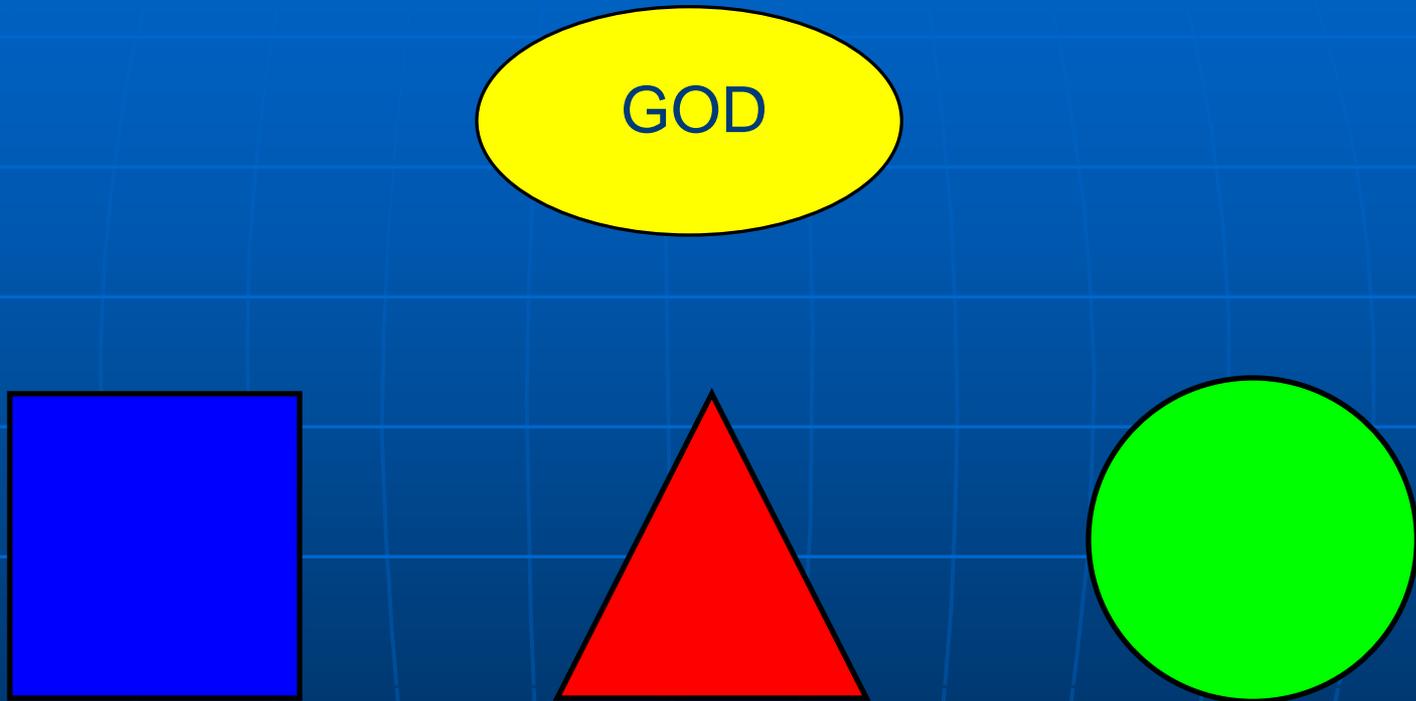
or focus on the hearer?

- The speaker does the hard work of making her/his messages as understandable to the hearer as possible
- We do this by focusing on the hearer *understanding* rather than on the content of the message
- *Hearer-oriented communication*

*Let's look for a moment
at how God communicates
with us*

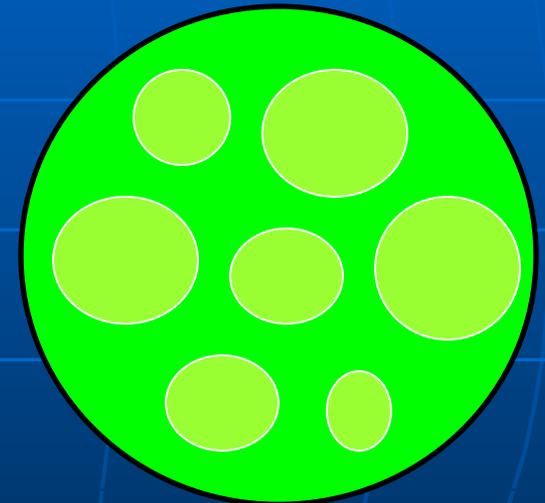
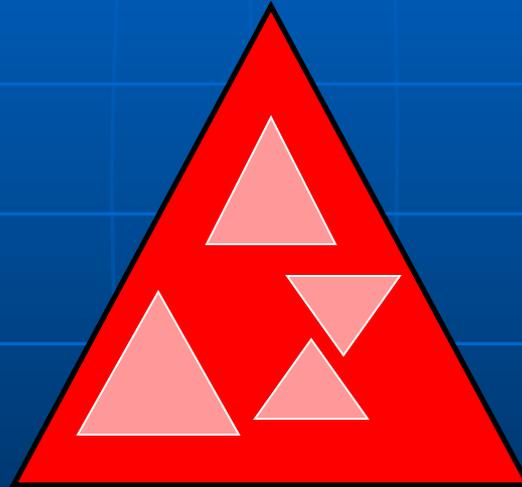
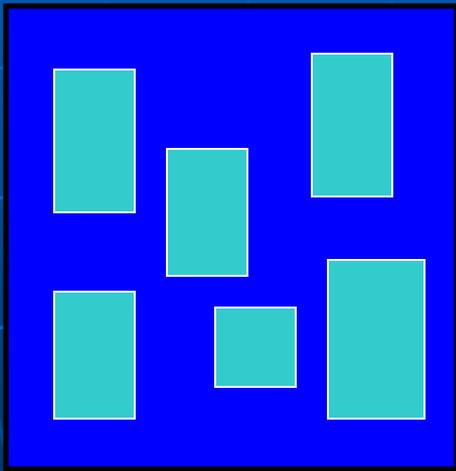
*Charles H. Kraft, Communication
Theory for Christian Witness*

The communication gap between God and human beings



Humans in their cultures

The gap between humans and their societies



Humans in their cultures

Gaps and Bridges

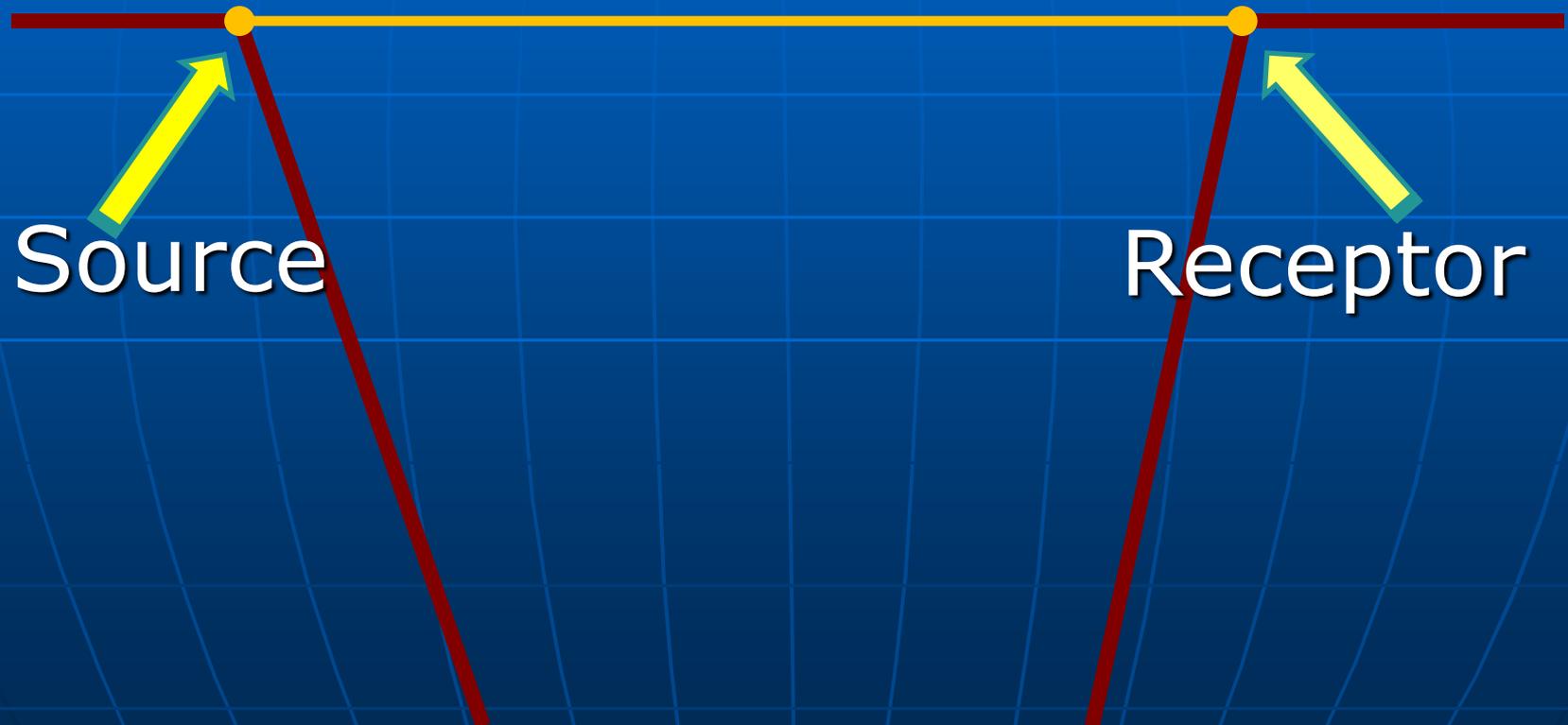
- Every communicational interaction involves a gap and a bridge
- The gap has two ends

The Communication GAP

Source
Speaker

Receptor
Hearer

*The bridge across the gap
must be **well-connected**
at both ends*

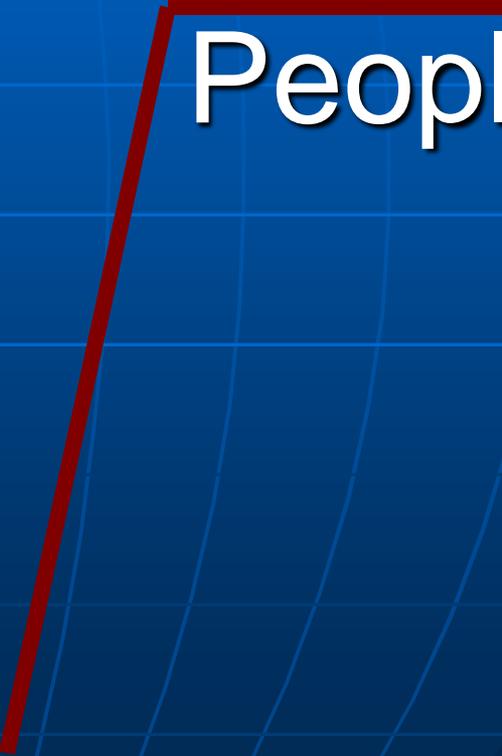


The *GAP*

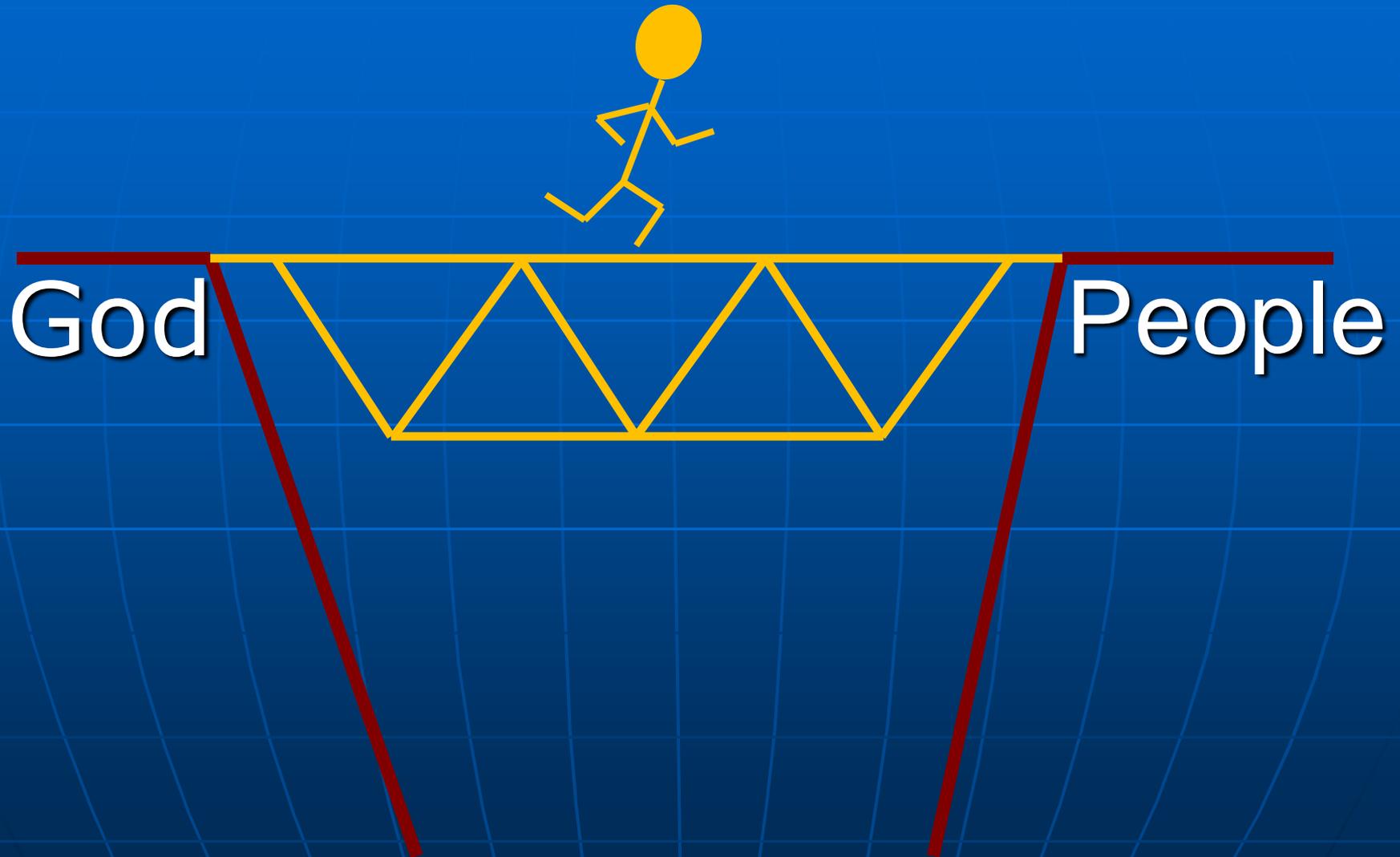
God



People



God *BRIDGES* The GAP



God's Strategy

receptor-oriented, seeking to reach his receptors by

- entering their frame of reference
- participating in their life
- to be fully understood by them.

"receptor-oriented communication"

God's goals

- God wants a relationship with the humans he created
- God reaches out to us to for a response on which the whole relationship is based
- God desires to be understood

- Following God's example, the communicator's task is not just to frame the message well
- but to do the hard work to understand the hearer's frame of reference
- then do their best to make the message understandable

and for the MCC . . .

The goal for communication
in the multicultural
congregation
is *understanding*

and for the MCC

- Communicate more for understanding than for information
- Communicate in many ways - verbally, in writing, thru websites
- through social media, music and the arts, and other symbols

and for the MCC

- In every communication the goal is to help others to understand
- rather than expecting others to do the hard work of understanding the communicator/communication
- This is hard work! It takes time!

a few ideas . . .

- Develop good listening
- Give *time* for communication to be processed
- Repeat as much as necessary
- Communicate in multiple outlets and in a variety of ways

a few ideas . . .

- Verbal messages are the most difficult to understand
- Duplicate verbal message in writing
- Speak and write in simple declarative sentences (no more than one “and”!)

a few ideas . . .

- Include those who are on the edges of using a new language
- Be eager to learn cultural customs
- Understand face to face responses

a few ideas . . .

- Invite others to tell their stories
- Take responsibility for all *miscommunication*
- “It’s not weird, it’s just different. And that’s OK!”

One speaker – 2 languages

For God so loved
the world that he
gave his only
Son, that all who

神爱世人，甚至
将他的独生子赐
给他们的，叫一切
信他的，不至灭
亡，反得永生。



In the Multicultural Congregation
we act as Jesus acted by embracing
people who often
are not like ourselves.

As the body of Christ that shares in
the incarnation, communicating well is
our opportunity to tangibly show
Christ's love for all.

Doing the hard work of focusing on understanding others' frames of reference results in

- positive regard
- good relationships
- a sense of well-being throughout the congregation

Receptor-Oriented Communication
is Christ-like
as we lay at Jesus' feet all rights
we may think we have
and give ourselves
to and for others

26 For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. 27 As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:26-28





